

**TOWN OF ELSMERE
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 3, 2009
6:30 P.M.**

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

CALL TO ORDER:

ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Burg – Present
Commissioner Lindell – Absent-Excused
Commissioner Sheldon – Present
Commissioner Smith – Present
Commissioner Swain – Absent
Commissioner Acton – Present
Chairman Backer – Present

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Approval of the minutes from the January 6, 2009 Planning Commission Meeting

ACTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Burg to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2009 Planning Commission Meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Acton.

VOTE:

All in favor VOTE: 4-0, 1 abstained with 2 Absent Motion Carried

NEW BUSINESS:

None

OLD BUSINESS:

The Commission discussed the review of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Ed O'Donnell with the University of Delaware introduced Valerie Miller from the Delaware Housing Authority, BJ Decorsy from the University of Delaware, Gilad Skolnick from the University of Delaware and Herb Inden from the State Planning Office

Mr. O'Donnell discussed public feedback and asked if the Town was interested in using the public survey which was used in 2004.

Town Manager John Giles stated that the Town has at several public events placed these surveys out and although many were taken very few have been returned at this time.

Valerie Miller from the Delaware State Housing Authority presented a housing analysis prototype for the Town of Elsmere. The presentation stated with a demographics survey stating that the Town's population will decrease by a projected 2% by the year 2020, and went on to explain some further projections showing the Town is projected to loose 2 housing units by that time as well. The median home value in the Town of Elsmere is \$162,000.00 which is considerably lower than that of New Castle County. When on a field survey with the Town Manager they looked for properties which were beyond repair and were not able to find any. Most of the structures located in the Town were built in the 1950's. Modernization of the structures in the Town is recommended. The housing authority recommends ensuring that future generations can remain in Elsmere and the homes do not get priced out, if you rehab, rehab an entire block.

Mr. Giles thanked Valerie on behalf of the Town for taking the time to complete this survey.

Mr. O'Donnell moved on to the annexation portion of the Comprehensive Plan, he explained where the Town's previous area of concern was and why. He asked the commission where they were interested in considering annexation and what would it be used for.

Chairman Backer stated that he felt that we should include annexation because it would increase the Town's tax base and increase the annual revenue.

Mr. O'Donnell asked where the Town is interested in as far as annexation.

First District Councilman John Jaremchuk stated that he would be interested if possible in a continuous way addressing the General Motors Property on Boxwood Road in the annexation plan.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if landowners have to petition the Town to be annexed.

Mr. Giles stated that is correct, interested parties must petition the Town for annexation.

Councilman Jaremchuk stated that at some point in the future that location would close and it would be in the property owners best interest to petition for annexation to receive a better offer.

Sixth District Councilman John Pasquale Stated that there is a numerous amount of remediation that would need to be done to the property due to the amount of chemicals stored underground.

Mr. Giles stated that as part of the annexation plan the Town should look at not just addressing existing homes but addressing open space and areas for re-development.

Mr. Giles stated that at this point the town is interesting in going from our current boundaries toward prices corner to center road, from center road to boxwood road, go down boxwood road to a point that would include the general motors property. North of Kirkwood Hwy we would go center road to the Barley Mill Plaza and come back to the Town in a natural way.

Mr. O'Donnell brought to the Town's attention that if these properties are addressed in the Comprehensive Plan, New Castle County would be brought into a discussion during the Plan's plus process.

Mr. Giles asked if during the process New Castle County said "we don't like your idea" could we still get approved.

Mr. Herb Inden of the State Planning Office stated that New Castle County could hold up our approval by a large length of time for an annexation issue. He also stated that the Town could also list this area as an area of concern.

Mr. Giles asked if this would need the Counties approval because it is already addressed in the current Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that it would affect the County because in the current plan it is addressed as an area of interest because of previous flooding problems, in the new plan it would be addressed as an area of possible annexation so a larger review would be necessary.

Mr. Giles asked Herb Inden if the Town were to produce a plan that does not specifically address annexation what would the time frame for an amendment look like.

Mr. Inden stated that it would be estimated at several months.

Councilman Jaremchuk asked if there would be a downside to placing the annexation portion into the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that the downside would be an extended timeline, such as in Delaware City it took 2 years to resolve.

Mr. O'Donnell moved the discussion to the existing land use for the Town. He stated that not too much has changed since the previous Comprehensive Plan.

5th District Councilwoman Joann Personti asked if it could be made very clear that the Current Land Use Map is not the Zoning of the property, it has become confusion in the past.

Mr. O'Donnell moved on to discuss public participation in the Comprehensive Plan Review.

Mr. Giles stated that the Town has been distributing questionnaires to Board & Commission Members. He has also made the questionnaires available at several Town events, residents are taking the questionnaires however not many are being returned even when the Town has offered to pick up the questionnaires.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that the Town could craft the questions to into the public meeting.

Mr. Giles asked if the university has the capability of taking the survey and placing it on the Town's website so that a resident can go home and take the survey and submit it via internet.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that he would have to speak with the programming department regarding this, however it would be an effective idea. He asked if the Town has a time and date that would be best to hold the public meeting.

Mr. Giles stated that the time and date would not be an issue as long as its not a Saturday night the Town would be able to use the Fire Hall as a meeting location.

Chairman Backer requested that the Town keep the meeting at 6:30 pm to keep in line with the regular meetings.

Mr. Giles stated that Wednesdays during the month of April would be the best time to meet.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if there were any other concerns that the Commission wanted to address in the plan.

Mr. Giles stated that the Town would like to address in-fill in the comprehensive plan. The Town has lost court cases regarding constructing houses behind houses because the Comprehensive Plan and the Code did not specifically address that it was not allowed.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that the Town should address the issue in the Comprehensive Plan and once adopted take the concept to the enabling legislation.

Mr. O'Donnell moved the discussion to the walk-ability study that will become part of the Comprehensive Plan turning the discussion over to BJ from the University of Delaware.

The Town is considering placing a walking path that would connect the Maple Ave Park to the Fairgrounds Park parallel to the train tracks along Maple and Dover Avenues with access points for the Police Department. This path would also make the Town eligible to receive grants to maintain and put the path into place.

Mr. Giles introduced Mr. William Dunn who would like to propose a few additions to the comprehensive plan which would improve the town.

Mr. Dunn presented his suggestions for the Comprehensive Plan. He asked the commission to consider restricting trucks over 5,000lbs except for local deliveries, from using Dupont Road from Faulkland Road to New Road, To standardize and reduce the speed limit on Dupont Road to 25mph from 35mph and post the road with "share the road" signs to alert drivers of possible pedestrians and bicyclists, request that Dupont Road be repaved with asphalt to reduce road noise, and to request that DelDOT prepare a plan and cost estimates to include funding for sidewalks along Dupont Road from Kirkwood Hwy to Lancaster Avenue.

1st District Councilman John Jaremchuk stated that he has read Mr. Dunn's Proposal and fully supports all of his recommendations.

6th District Councilman John Pasquale stated that he too fully supports Mr. Dunn's recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan.

1st District Councilman John Jaremchuck stated that he feels that all of these points should be placed into the Comprehensive Plan and several of the recommendations should be brought up to council as resolutions or ordinances. He suggested that Mr. Dunn speak with his neighbors to be sure that none on them would be against the sidewalks or bike paths.

The Commission thanked Mr. Dunn for his input and thought into the Comprehensive Plan.

ITEMS SUBMITTED BY CHAIRMAN AND BOARD MEMBERS:

None

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None
ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Burg to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sheldon.

VOTE:

All in favor VOTE: 5-0 with 2 Absent Motion Carried

At this time the meeting was adjourned.

These minutes summarize the agenda items and other issues discussed at the March 3, 2009 Planning Commission Meeting. Votes are recorded accurately. The audio tape(s) of this meeting will be available at Town Hall for a period of two years from the date these minutes are approved. The audio tape(s) may be reviewed at Town Hall by appointment and in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

LEON BACKER, CHAIRMAN

CHARLES LINDELL, SECRETARY